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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEMORIAL DEDICATION CEREMONY TO HONOR THOSE BURIED AT HISTORIC  
BRYCE HOSPITAL**

MONTGOMERY – On Sunday April 18, 2010, the Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee will hold a special memorial dedication ceremony at the chapel on the Bryce Hospital campus in Tuscaloosa. This ceremony will honor the thousands of unnamed souls buried in four cemeteries near the hospital. While most graves are no longer marked due to vandalism or neglect, a remnant are marked by a simple stone or iron cross inscribed with only a number. “We want to appropriately honor the lives of those patients whose final resting place has not received the respect they deserve,” said John Houston, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

The Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee plans include the placement of historical markers at the site of each of the four cemeteries. At the ceremony, they will unveil an artist rendition of a monument that will be placed in public view at one of the cemeteries on River Road. Bryce Hospital has a rich history that encapsulates the architectural evolution of mental health in the United States and the beginnings of the civil rights movement for people who experience mental illness. Having endured both the Civil War and the burning of the adjacent University of Alabama by federal troops in 1865, Bryce Hospital is a symbol of resilience and reform. As a contemporary of the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery, Bryce is an irreplaceable historical treasure for future generations. Although the historic white domed hospital and surrounding campus is scheduled to be passed on to the University of Alabama, the cemeteries will remain the property and responsibility of the ADMH. The department, along with advocates, and family members are making a greater commitment to honoring patients buried at Bryce; the first step in demonstrating that commitment will be at Sunday’s dedication ceremony.

The ceremony is open to the public. The keynote speaker will be Mr. Larry Fricks, a nationally acclaimed consumer advocate for people who experience mental illness. Mr. Fricks led a consumer movement to restore the neglected Central State Hospital cemetery in Milledgeville, GA. More than 30,000 forgotten graves were overtaken by brush and forest before the restoration took place. A description of the Central State restoration project may be viewed at: <http://www.power2u.org/articles/empower/cemetery.html>

All former patients, friends and family members, employees, advocates, and people with interest in Bryce Hospital and those who experience mental illness are encouraged to attend.

**EVENT DETAILS & RESOURCES**

Event: Bryce Hospital Cemetery Memorial Dedication Ceremony

Date/Time: Sunday April 18, 2010; 2:00 p.m.

Place: Bryant Jordan Chapel, on the campus of Bryce Hospital, Tuscaloosa

For more information about this event, please contact Dr. John Ziegler, Director of ADMH’s Office of Public Information & Community Relations, at [john.ziegler@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:john.ziegler@mh.alabama.gov) or 334-242-3417.

Information about the history of Bryce Hospital and the Historical Preservation Committee and its work can be found by visiting <http://www.mh.alabama.gov/BryceHospitalProject/default.aspx>.